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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between children's ideas about how to be helpful to peers and peer acceptance. Third- and fifth-grade children responded to three sociometric measures and were later individually interviewed under four conditions on two occasions in response to different cartoon situations. Children were asked to suggest helpful strategies in response to cartoons showing a child being teased, yelled at, and having a schoolwork problem. Children's strategies generated 13 different categories (e.g., consoles-comforts, instructs). The number of responses suggested by each child that were different from those given by peers yielded a uniqueness score. The number of categories indicated by a child's responses yielded a flexibility score. Four separate multiple regression analyses were performed in which four sociometric dependent variables were regressed on grade, sex, uniqueness, and flexibility. For each of the dependent measures, grade and sex accounted for the majority of the variance. Findings for uniqueness were also consistent for each measure. Children's unique or deviant ideas about helpfulness were found to be predictive of low sociometric ratings. Significant findings differed for males and females on uniqueness and flexibility measures across the four conditions. Results and their implications are discussed in some detail. (Author/MS)

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The Relationship Between Children's Ideas

About Helpfulness and Peer Acceptance

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The Relationship Between Children's Ideas About Helpfulness and Peer Acceptance

In early studies, researchers observed and described children's prosocial behavior. Green (1933a, 1933b) observed the frequency of children's friendly behavior in a preschool setting. Murphy (1937) categorized preschool children's "sympathetic" responses to children and adults in distress (e.g., helps, comforts, suggests solutions). More recently, Severy and Davis (1972) compared normal and retarded children's prosocial behavior in emotional-support and task-helping situations.

The relationship between children's prosocial behavior and peer status has also been a concern of recent study. Among the prosocial behaviors found to be related to peer acceptance and friendship nominations are helpful behaviors. Marshall and McCandless (1957) observed young children and found that friendliness including helpful behavior was positively correlated with sociometric nominations. Moore (1967) asked preschoolers to nominate classmates who could be described by a "friendly approach," that is, kids who like to play near others, talk a lot, or help kids who are hurt or sad. "Friendly approach" nominations and sociometric status were positively correlated.

The contribution of prosocial behavior in the development of children's peer relationships has also been demonstrated in the social skill training research. In several studies, socially isolated children's peer interactions increased after viewing videotapes or films of children approaching peers and exhibiting prosocial behaviors (O'Connor, 1969; Evers & Schwarz, 1971; Keller & Carlson, 1974). In a study by Oden and Asher (1977, in press) 9- and 10-year-old low-accepted children increased in sociometric ratings from peers for play situations after they had received coaching sessions which consisted of instruction in social skills (e.g., cooperation--sharing, taking turns; communication--talking, listening), playing games with peers, and a postplay review.

The social skills selected for focus in the experimental and correlational research have been predominantly based from the research investigator's point of view. These formulations of children's social behavior tend to be quite abstract (e.g., cooperation and communication). Such concepts may only approximately or roughly serve as referents for children's social behavior. Baldwin and Baldwin (1970) interviewed children and adults to examine their understanding of kindness in reference to cartoon drawings of interpersonal situations. In evaluating the "kinder" actions, young children's concepts appeared to be largely based on the outcomes of actions whereas older children and adults also considered intentions. Gold (1958) interviewed primary age children to determine the characteristics which they perceived to be socially powerful or influential among their peers. Children who were ranked high in social influence by peers were also considered to be especially high in emotional characteristics (referred to by the children as "friendly, fun, and nice"). Peevers and Secord (1973) explored the cognitive processes of children and adults by asking them to describe several liked and disliked peers. They found differences between younger and older subjects in their cognitive differentiation, egocentric involvement, evaluative consistency, and depth of explanation. For example, younger children tended to describe a peer with global characteristics which failed to differentiate her or him as unique from other peers. Further research is needed which examines children's conceptions of social behavior and peer relationships.

Intervention research would also be enhanced by studies aimed at gaining more knowledge about children's ideas concerning social behavior. Children who lack social competence and peer status may lack social performance skills, motivation, and/or cognitive skills. Such children may also lack knowledge of their peer's views. Developmental lags, cognitive or experiential, present

consequences which only serve to further children's isolation from social learning. Over time, lack of social competence may result in a reputation of low peer acceptance or few friendships. Without adequate intervention, such children's development may be considerably altered and result in numerous negative long-term consequences (Cowen, Pederson, Babigian, Izzo & Trost, 1973).

Assessment methods are needed to determine children's ideas about social behavior, situations, and relationships. A few studies are especially relevant here. Flappen (1968) asked children of various ages to describe and explain the behaviors, thoughts, and feelings of characters in a film. The data were then sorted into categories representing the various responses. Yarrow, Scott, and Waxler (1973) interviewed children using cartoon drawings depicting children in need of help. The children's verbal responses were then assessed, however, according to a preestablished criterion of inclination to be helpful. Gottman, Gonzo, & Rasmussen (1976) interviewed children on how to be helpful to a child who was new at school and to a child who was having difficulty with a math problem. Children who were low- versus well-accepted by peers differed in their knowledge of how to make friends; the children also differed on a referential communication word-pair task.

The present research was conducted to determine the knowledge which children acquire or discover as they develop with respect to one type of prosocial behavior, helpfulness, in reference to specific peer interaction situations. Further, the assessment of children's ideas were examined in relation to sociometric assessment of their peer relationships.

Children in two third-grade and two fifth-grade classrooms were asked to rate their peers on how much they liked to play and work with them in school. The children were also asked to nominate three best friends. In addition, children in one third-grade and one fifth-grade classroom were individually

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interviewed on two occasions in response to three cartoon themes. Children were asked to suggest helpful strategies in response to cartoons showing a child being yelled at by a peer, teased by peers, and having a schoolwork problem.

In one interview, each child was asked to assume the perspective of the onlooking child (helper) who is shown observing the child in need of help (helpee). In the other interview, each child was asked to assume the role of the child in need of help (helpee). In both interviews, children responded to the first cartoon frame showing the helpee (the child in need of help) in a peer group context, and then they responded to the second frame showing the helpee in a peer dyad context, that is, alone with the onlooking child (helper). Children responded to peer group and dyad frames for each of the cartoon themes (yelling, teasing, and schoolwork). After the children responded by suggesting helpful strategies for all the cartoons, they were asked to nominate classmates whom they thought would be helpful in such situations.

Children's ideas about helpful behaviors were categorized according to clusters of similar responses. Each child's responses were assessed for uniqueness or deviance from the peer group and for flexibility of responses across cartoon themes. The uniqueness and flexibility measures were then examined in relationship to the various sociometric measures. It was expected that there would be an inverse relationship between unique or deviant ideas and peer status and a positive relationship between flexibility in ideas and peer status. Further, it was expected that peer status would be positively correlated with the helpfulness peer nominations.

Method

Subjects

Two third-grade and two fifth-grade classrooms in a predominantly middle class parochial school were selected for this study. Of these 131 children,

32 males and 35 females were in the third grade and 30 males and 34 females were in the fifth grade. Children in each of the four classrooms were given sociometric questionnaires. In addition, children in one third-grade and one fifth-grade classroom were given helpfulness interviews.

Sociometric Assessment

An adult female introduced herself to each classroom as someone who was interested in learning about how children play and work together in school. She administered two peer roster-and-rating sociometric questionnaires (Singleton & Asher, 1976) on which children rated each other in response to two questions administered separately during the same session: "How much do you like to play with this person in school?" and "How much do you like to work with this person in school?" Children were instructed on how to use a five-point scale with 1 being "I don't like to" and 5 being "I like to a lot". Next, a friendship inventory was administered by distributing a class roster on which children were asked to circle the names of three of their best friends.

Children's responses yielded five sociometric measures for each child: average play and work ratings received from males; average play and work ratings received from females; and a friendship measure based on the number of nominations received from all classmates.

Helpfulness Interviews

Each child was individually interviewed by the first author and asked to suggest helpful behaviors in response to three cartoon sets in which a child was shown being teased, yelled at, or having a schoolwork problem. In pilot research, children indicated that these situations represented ones in which they frequently needed help from peers. Each cartoon set consisted of two frames. In each case, the first frame showed a child in need of help in a peer group context,

[see (a), (c), and (e), Figure 1]. In the second frame, the same child was shown immediately afterward in a dyad context (in the company of one peer) [see (b), (d), and (f), Figure 1]. Two sets of cartoons were employed, one

Insert Figure 1 about here

for males and one for females. Each of the different cartoon sets with samples of male and female versions are shown in Figure 1. Children received the three different cartoon sets in different orders according to random assignment.

Each child was individually interviewed on two separate occasions in a room out of view from the classroom by the first author. In each of the two interviews, children were asked to take a particular perspective in responding to all three cartoon sets. In one interview, the experimenter asked the child to respond by taking the helper perspective which corresponded to the onlooking character in the first cartoon frames (Fig. 1, a, c, and e) and again in the second cartoon frames (Fig. 1, b, d, and f) when the onlooking character was shown alone with the child who was in need of help. For this interview, the experimenter said:

Here are some pictures I would like you to look at. I would like you to pretend that you are one of the boys (girls) in these pictures. These pictures are about children your age.

The presentations by the experimenter were nearly the same for each of the cartoon themes (yelling, teasing, and schoolwork). The experimenter first presented the peer group cartoon frame and said:

Here is a picture of some children. Let's pretend that you are this boy (girl). [The experimenter pointed to the onlooking character.] You see a boy from your classroom

yelling at this boy (or teasing, having a problem with school-work). [The experimenter pointed to the character in need of help.] This boy feels sad. What is a way that you could help this boy?

Each time that the experimenter asked this question, he waited for a response. If the child did not respond or the response was quite vague, the experimenter said, "Can you give me an example of what you might do?" The experimenter then presented the peer dyad cartoon frame and said:

And what if here, this boy [The experimenter pointed to the character in need of help.] is still feeling sad about being yelled at. Now what is a way that you could help this boy? Can you give me an example of what you might do?

The procedure for presenting the teasing and schoolwork cartoons was the same.

In the other interview, each child was asked to respond to the cartoons by taking the perspective of the child in need of help, i.e., the helpee perspective. The experimenter said:

Do you remember last time I asked you to look at these pictures and pretend that you were one of the boys (girls) in these pictures? These are pictures about children your age. [The experimenter first presented the peer group cartoon frame.] Here is a picture of some children. Now let's pretend that you are this boy (girl), [The experimenter pointed to the character in need of help.] and this boy is yelling at you (or teasing, or having a problem with schoolwork). What is a way that this boy could help you? Can you give me an example of what he might do?

One half of the male and female subjects were randomly assigned to receive the helper perspective in the first interview and the helpee perspective in the

second interview, and the other half of the male and female subjects received the helpee perspective first and the helper perspective second.

Categorization of Responses

The interview data were separated into mutually exclusive categories. The following examples corresponded to the 13 categories which were taken from the helper perspective data: alternative activity (e.g., "Want to play ball?"), console-comfort (e.g., "Don't feel sad."), distract attention (e.g., "Tell him a joke!"), instruct (e.g., "Show her how to do it," or "Tell him to ignore those kids next time."), interpret (e.g., "The kids didn't really mean it."), mediate-negotiate (e.g., "Talk to that kid to get him to stop."), moralize (e.g., "Tell them that it's not nice to do that."), order-command (e.g., "Tell them, 'stop it!'"), physically aggressive (e.g., "Chase them," or "Punch him."), question-investigate (e.g., "Want some help?" or "Go over there and see what problem she was on."), solicit adult (e.g., "Get the teacher," or "Tell her mother."), verbally insult-attack (e.g., "Call them stupid."), and other, (e.g., "Buy her a toy," or "Take the child away."). Highly similar responses for each of these categories were obtained from the helpee perspective.

Three graduate students who were unfamiliar with the data (two females and one male) were selected to be independent judges. They were first trained by practicing categorizing exemplative children's responses to the various cartoon frames into the 13 different categories. Each judge then categorized each of the 816 helpful behaviors suggested by the children in the study. Total agreement between the three judges was obtained on 96% of these responses. Two out of three judges agreed on an additional 3% of the responses, and all three judges disagreed on only 1% of the responses.

Uniqueness and Flexibility Measures

Two measures, uniqueness and flexibility, were derived from the behaviors children suggested would be helpful to peers. A child's response was considered

unique when no other same-sex child had responded to the particular cartoon frame with the same type of strategy, that is, no other same-sex child's response was assigned by the judges to the same behavioral category. Responses which did not receive 100% interjudge agreement and responses assigned to the "other" category were also treated as unique responses. Third-grade children suggested 91 "helpful" behaviors which were considered unique, and fifth-grade children suggested 75 unique responses. In total, 166 unique responses out of 816 responses, or 20%, were suggested by children. Unique responses to the yelling, teasing, and schoolwork cartoon themes were summed resulting in 4 unique scores per child based on the total unique responses to peer group cartoons and peer dyad cartoons from both the helpee and helper perspectives. Cartoon frames will be referred to hereafter as helper-group, helper-dyad, helpee-group, and helpee-dyad.

The flexibility measure was based on the total number of different categories to which each child's responses were assigned summing across the yelling, teasing, and schoolwork cartoon themes. Each child received 4 flexibility scores corresponding to responses given to the helper-group, helper-dyad, helpee-group, and helpee-dyad cartoon frames.

Helpfulness Nominations

Children were also asked to nominate classmates whom they felt actually were helpful to peers. At the end of each of the two helpfulness interviews, the experimenter presented each child with a class roster and reviewed the names of the child's classmates. The experimenter then again presented each of the cartoon frames in the same order and from the same perspective (helper or helpee) as in the interview and asked the child to nominate helpful classmates. For example, in the helper-group perspective, each child was asked to nominate a classmate who would be helpful to the peer. The experimenter said:

Okay, let's take another look at this picture. Remember this boy (girl) was being yelled at (or teased, or having a problem with schoolwork) and he (or she) feels sad. Who in your classroom would help this boy? [The experimenter pointed to the character in need of help.] Point to the child's name on this list.

The questions were highly similar for the helper-dyad frames. In the helpee-group perspective each child was asked to nominate a classmate who would be helpful to him or her, i.e., the interviewee. The experimenter said:

Okay, let's take another look at this picture. Remember this boy was yelling at you and you feel sad. Who is your classroom would help you here? [The experimenter pointed to the character in need of help.] Point to the child's name on this list.

The questions were highly similar for the helpee-dyad frames.

The number of helpful nominations received by each child from classmates were summed across the yelling, teasing, and schoolwork cartoon themes. Each child received scores from this data based on nominations as helpful to peers and to the interviewer for the group and dyad cartoon frames.

Results

The data collected from the helpfulness interviews and the sociometric questionnaires were assessed by descriptive, correlational, and multiple regression methods.

Helpful Behaviors

Each child suggested a total of 12 helpful behaviors in response to the peer group and peer dyad cartoon frames (yelling, teasing, and schoolwork) from both the helper and helpee perspectives. The strategies assigned by the adult judges to the 13 categories as previously described are presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Each category's frequency total was based on the total number of responses given by children to the three peer helpfulness cartoon themes.

A perusal of Table 1 shows that order-command, instruct, and question-investigate, represented the most frequent types of strategies given by children to the group situations (helpee and helper perspectives). For the dyad situation (helper and helpee perspectives), console-comfort, instruct, and alternative activity, represented the children's most frequent types of behavioral strategies. It is interesting to observe some differences in the data between third- and fifth-grade male and female children for the dyad cartoon frames. Alternative activity and instruct were highly frequent strategies for third- and fifth-grade males, and console-comfort strategies were somewhat less frequent. In contrast, third-grade females suggested console-comfort strategies most frequently. Instruct and alternative activity strategies were also frequently suggested by third-grade females. Fifth-grade females, however, suggested instruct strategies most frequently and alternative activity and console-comfort strategies less frequently.

Sociometric Ratings and Nominations

A series of correlational analyses were conducted to assess the relationship between the sociometric measures employed in the two third-grade and two fifth-grade classrooms. Each child received an average rating from same- and opposite-sex classmates for the "play-with" and for the "work-with" ratings. Play and work ratings were significantly correlated for each group ($p < .001$), ranging from $r = .79$ to $.98$, (n ranged from 14 to 18).

Each child also received "best friends" nominations from both same- and opposite-sex classmates. These nominations were treated as one total score since few children received nominations from opposite-sex peers. "Best friends" was highly correlated with play and work ratings, ranging in significance from

$p < .05$ to $p < .001$ (Spearman rank) except for one third-grade male group with play ratings and one fifth-grade male group with work ratings. The same-sex "best friends" and play-ratings correlations for the third- and fifth-grade male and female groups ranged from $r = .53$ to $.93$ (n ranged from 14 to 18). Similarly, correlations with the work ratings ranged from $r = .50$ to $.97$. The correlations obtained here between play, work, and best friends are similar to those found in previous studies (Singleton & Asher, 1976; Oden & Asher, in press).

Children in one third-grade and one fifth-grade classroom also received helpfulness nominations given by classmates in the helpfulness interviews. Each classmate served as an interviewee and nominated classmates in response to the peer group and dyad cartoon frames for both the helper and helpee perspectives. Although children could select from a list of all classmates, no child nominated an opposite-sex classmate. Apparently, the use of cartoon characters of the same sex as the interviewee restricted children from nominating opposite-sex classmates. The helpfulness nominations which children received from classmates (the interviewees) were summed across the yelling, teasing, and schoolwork cartoon themes. Each child thus received four helpful nominations from this data: helpful to peers in group, helpful to peers in the dyad, helpful to the interviewee in the group, helpful to the interviewee in the dyad. Table 2 shows the correlations between the four helpful nomination scores and the play and work ratings and best friend nominations.

Insert Table 2 about here

It can be seen that the pattern of correlations obtained between the helpful nomination data and the play, work, and "best friends" sociometric measures were highly significant for all groups. Only a few nonsignificant

correlations were obtained. Nonsignificant correlations were found for the third-grade male group between helpful nominations and play ratings given by males and work ratings given by females. In the fifth-grade female group, nonsignificant correlations were found between helpfulness nominations and play and work ratings given by males. Overall, helpfulness was found to be a highly related variable to measures of peer acceptance and friendship.

Multiple Regression Analysis

In order to assess the relationship between uniqueness and flexibility and the play and work ratings, a series of multiple linear regression analyses were employed. The SPSS multiple regression subprogram was utilized. Separate multiple regression analyses were performed in which each of the sociometric dependent variables was regressed on the following independent variables: grade, sex, uniqueness, and flexibility, entered in that order. The play and work sociometric measures yielded an average rating given by males and an average rating given by females for each child. Four dependent variables, that is, ratings given by males and given by females on the play and work sociometric measures were thus employed in separate regression analyses.

Results on the play ratings given by males indicated that this regression was highly significant, $F(10,57) = 29.8$, $p < .001$. After all the independent variables were entered, 84% of the variance was accounted for ($R^2 = .84$). Additional F tests indicated that grade and sex variables made the more significant contribution to the regression, $F(2,65) = 107.15$, $p < .001$, accounting for 77% of the variance ($R^2 = .77$). After grade and sex were entered, the contribution of the four uniqueness variables taken together (i.e., helper-group, helper-dyad, helpee-group and helpee-dyad) was significant, $F(4,61) = 5.20$, $p < .01$, accounting for an additional 7% of the variance. After grade, sex, and the uniqueness variables were entered, the four flexibility variables were not significant, $F(4,57) = .35$ n.s.

Results on the play ratings given by females indicated that this regression was also highly significant, $F(10,57) = 34.22$, $p < .001$. After all the independent variables were entered 86% of the variance was accounted for ($R^2 = .86$). Additional F tests indicated that grade and sex variables make a significant contribution to the regression, $F(2,65) = 66.40$, $p < .001$, accounting for 67% of the variance ($R^2 = .67$). After grade and sex were entered, the contribution of the four uniqueness variables taken together was significant, $F(4,61) = 12.30$, $p < .001$, accounting for an additional 15% of the variance. After grade, sex, and the uniqueness variables were entered, the four flexibility variables taken together made a significant contribution, $F(4,57) = 3.90$, $p < .01$, accounting for an additional 4% of the variance.

The results on the work ratings given by males indicated that this regression was also highly significant, $F(10,57) = 22.17$, $p < .001$. After all the independent variables were entered, 80% of the variance was accounted for ($R^2 = .80$). Additional F tests indicated that grade and sex variables made a significant contribution to the regression, $F(2,65) = 67.51$, $p < .001$, accounting for 68% of the variance ($R^2 = .68$). After grade and sex were entered, the four uniqueness variables together contributed significantly, $F(4,61) = 7.86$, $p < .01$, accounting for an additional 11% of the variance. After the preceding variables were entered, flexibility variables together did not contribute significantly, $F(4,57) = .69$, n.s.

The results of the work ratings given by females indicated that this regression was again highly significant, $F(10,57) = 21.32$, $p < .001$. After all the independent variables were entered, 79% of the variance was accounted for ($R^2 = .79$). Additional F tests indicated that grade and sex variables contributed significantly to the regression equation, $F(2,65) = 41.34$, $p < .01$, accounting for 56% of the variance ($R^2 = .56$). After grade and sex were entered, the four uniqueness variables together also contributed significantly,

$F(4,61) = 11.62, p < .01$, accounting for an additional 19% of the variance. After the preceding variables were entered, the four flexibility variables contributed significantly, $F(4,57) = 2.62, p < .05$, accounting for an additional 4% of the variance.

Each regression coefficient attributable to the independent variables were then tested for significance (t -tests). Table 3 shows the regression coefficients attributable to grade, sex, and uniqueness. The regression coefficients

Insert Table 3 about here

attributed to the grade variable in all four regression equations were highly significant. Grade thus contributed significantly to the prediction of play and work ratings given by both males and females after sex, uniqueness, and flexibility variables were taken into account. The regression coefficients for grade are negative. As grade increased, sociometric ratings which children gave to each other were lower in magnitude, i.e., fifth-graders rated each other lower than third-graders rated each other. Similarly, the regression coefficients attributed to the sex variable were also highly statistically significant for play and work ratings given by both males and females. The direction of these regression coefficients, however, differed for males and females. Males ratings of females decreased from the ratings males gave to each other, i.e., males rated males greater than they rated females. Similarly, females ratings of females increased from the ratings they gave to males, i.e., females rated each other greater than they rated males.

Table 3 also shows the regression coefficients for the uniqueness variable according to unique responses for helper-group, helper-dyad, helpee-group, and helpee-dyad.

In the helper-group, helpee-group, and helpee-dyad, the obtained regression coefficients for uniqueness with respect to sociometric ratings

were negative. This inverse relationship indicates that as unique responses tended to increase, sociometric ratings tended to decrease.

Significant regression coefficients were obtained most often in the helpee perspective. Apparently, data from the helper-dyad did not contribute to the overall relationship between unique ideas and sociometric ratings.

The regression analyses of play and work ratings from both males and females show that the four flexibility variables (helper-group, helper-dyad, helpee-group, and helpee-dyad) added significant contributions only in the prediction of play and work ratings from females. The flexibility variables show statistically significant negative regression coefficients for helper-dyad for both play and work ratings from females ($B = -.29, -.26, p < .01$). This inverse finding indicates that as the number of different types of strategies suggested by children tended to increase, sociometric ratings from females tended to decrease.

To summarize these findings, the independent variables, grade and sex, were significant predictors of play and work ratings given by males and females. The addition of the uniqueness variables significantly increased the accuracy of predicting play and work ratings given by males and females. The flexibility variables significantly increased the accuracy of predicting play and work ratings given by females. However, flexibility added no significant predictor accuracy for play and work ratings given by males.

An examination of the findings obtained for the different types of helpfulness situations and perspectives and the overall relationship between unique ideas or strategies and peer acceptance leads to further questions of the uniqueness data. First of all, to what extent is there agreement on the types of strategies which peers considered helpful for the various social perspectives and situations? Secondly, which types of strategies were considered to

be unique, i.e., mentioned by only one peer? A frequency tabulation of the data summing across grades, sex, and cartoons was thus compiled. In the helper-group the most frequent types of helpful strategies were order-command, instruct, and question-investigate with frequencies of 66, 44, and 35, or 71% of the total responses. In helper-dyad, instruct, alternative activity, and console-comfort were the most frequent strategies, with frequencies of 56, 49, and 40, or 71% of the total responses. In the helpee-group, the results showed that the strategy categories which represented the most frequent types of helpful strategies were order-command, instruct, and question-investigate with frequencies of 71, 52, and 22, or 71% of the total responses given by children. In the helpee-dyad, the frequencies of instruct, alternative activity, and console-comfort, were 60, 46, and 30, or 67% of the total responses given by children.

Instruct strategies were considered by children to be helpful for both helper and helpee perspectives in group and dyad situations whereas console-comfort strategies were considered to be helpful only in the dyad situations. The strategies which were rarely suggested and often unique included distract attention, physically aggressive, and verbally insult-attack. Otherwise, the types of strategies which might be considered helpful in one social situation were considered to be unique for another. In particular, order-command strategies were frequently suggested in group situations, but found to be unique responses in dyad situations. In contrast, while alternative activity was frequently suggested in dyad situations, it was found to be a unique response in group situations.

In general, it can be said from this frequency tabulation that there was a high degree of agreement among peers as to the types of responses which were considered helpful. Further, there appeared to be some awareness of different

social situational factors since the children responded differentially to the group and dyad conditions. Children appeared to respond less differentially to the helpee and helper perspectives.

Discussion

In the present research, several findings were highly similar to those of previous studies. In particular, correlations between play and work ratings and best-friend nominations were highly significant, and grade and sex were significant predictors of peer status (e.g., Singleton & Asher, 1976; Oden & Asher, 1977). The current study also demonstrated significant correlations between nominations a child received as a helpful peer and play and work ratings and best-friend nominations. This finding provides validation that helpfulness is an important prosocial behavior in children's peer relationships. The major finding of this study was that unique ideas suggested by children in reference to cartoons depicting helpful situations were predictive of peer status for all sociometric measures. Children who gave fewer unique or deviant responses to the helpfulness cartoons tended to be highly rated by both male and female classmates, and children who gave many unique responses were more lowly-rated by classmates.

Considerable agreement was found among children's suggestions as to the types of behaviors they considered to be helpful in various situations. In the yelling, teasing, and schoolwork cartoons where peer group situations were depicted, order-command, instruct, and question-investigate types of strategies comprised 71% of the total helpful responses given by children. In the cartoons depicting peer dyad situations, instruct, alternative activity, and console-comfort types of strategies comprised a range of 67% to 71% of the total helpful suggestions. Although most children reliably agreed about the preferred types of helpful strategies for the various cartoon themes, their responses indicated

that they were also able to appreciate different requirements for the group and dyad situations. Only "instruct" helpful strategies were highly suggested by male and female children for both peer group and dyad helpful situations. However, the overall findings indicated that some children were not aware of the different types of strategies which their classmates valued, and/or they had difficulty in applying the strategies to the appropriate situation.

For the helper and helpee perspectives, there was also a high degree of similarity between the types of helpful strategies suggested by children. In the helpee perspective, children appeared to anticipate or expect helpful types of behaviors from classmates which would have a high degree of likely occurrence. The ability to make such predictions or have such expectancies would seem to require a child to be aware of peer values and skills and also to focus on these when actually making a predication for a specific social situation. In the helpee perspective, in particular, children's frequent unique ideas appeared to be highly egocentric in that these strategies would probably be helpful only for themselves, that is, the children selected strategies that might be difficult for classmates to know about or would require a helper to deviate from peer group values, e.g., physically attacking a peer. Furthermore, in regression analyses, unique responses suggested by children for the helpee perspectives in both the group and dyad cartoons were the best predictors of play and work ratings from both males and females.

Since the helpee perspective encourages children to consider each of the social situations as they themselves might experience them, this procedure may provide a more accurate assessment of the ideas or concepts which children would typically employ in social encounters. In contrast, the helper perspective encourages children to provide their awareness of behaviors that are helpful to peers in general. Further research is needed to validate the relationship between uniqueness and sociometric variables with additional

groups representing varying characteristics and educational contexts. Sampling of additional social situations and prosocial concepts than those employed here should also be investigated.

In the present research, flexibility, that is, suggesting different types of helpful strategies across the yelling, teasing, and schoolwork cartoon themes was found to contribute significantly to predictions of play and work ratings given by third- and fifth-grade females. Flexibility did not contribute significantly to predictions of play and work ratings given by males. In the regression of flexibility on play and work ratings given by females, an inverse regression coefficient was obtained. Lower flexibility in responding was predictive of higher peer status. This finding was unexpected. In situations such as the peer dyad situation, flexibility in responding may not be valued by peers. Flexibility here may actually constitute a measure of inconsistency across the dyad frames. Higher consistency may indicate greater skill in determining the most appropriate or useful ideas. More research is needed to examine additional measures of children's cognitive processes (e.g., role-taking, differentiation, inference) to determine their contributions as predictors of peer status.

Research aimed at male versus female ideas of prosocial behavior in various situations is needed. It may be the case that females, for example, are more restrictive in the types of helpful behaviors they value. In this study, unique responses accounted for 7% of the variance in play ratings and 11% of the variance in work ratings given by third- and fifth-grade males compared to 15% of the variance accounted for in play ratings and 19% in work ratings given by females. Males may value additional prosocial behavior not studied here. Future research might also examine more discrepant ages than those studied here to better establish developmental changes.

The current research indicated the kinds of ideas which children of these ages might have about helpful behaviors for peer interactions and the types of behaviors that are particularly valued and expected from peers. It is likely that these responses might not have been as accurately anticipated from the adult's perspective. Given that unique or deviant ideas were significantly related to children's peer status, future research examining children's peer relationships should use methods to attain children's views. The interview procedure employed here provided informative data on children's ideas and all children responded to the interview with interest.

Social skill training studies, in particular, would appear to be enhanced by learning about the social behaviors children value. Educational and child care methods would also seem to gain from such knowledge. It is especially validating that previous research with other populations gathered observational data about helpful behaviors and that the categories they established were similar to the categories which were generated from children's suggestions in the present study, (e.g., Murphy, 1937; Severy & Davis, 1971). Further research is needed to evaluate the correspondence between what children say about their behavior in social situations and what they actually do in these situations. Furthermore, the present research suggested that children who might actually employ social strategies which are not valued by peers may also experience low peer acceptance. Alternatively, other reasons for low peer acceptance or isolation may result in limited resources for a child's learning about what peers value. In either case, lack of knowledge would seem to limit a child's social skills in relating to peers as well as future social development.

Finally, the present study indicated that it is important to determine the kinds of behavior which children will consider to be of value. Children need to learn awareness of peer values in order to interact effectively and establish positive peer relationships.

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Footnotes

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Requests for reprints and a detailed description of the interview procedure are available upon request from Gary Ladd, College of Education, Center for Development, Learning, and Instruction, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York, 14627.

Table 1
Frequencies of Categorized Helpful Responses

		Categories													
		Alternative Activity	Console- Comfort	Distract Attention	Instruct	Interpret	Mediate- Negotiate	Moralize	Order- Command	Physically Aggressive	Question- Investigate	Solicit Adult	Verbally Insult- Attack	Other	
Third-grade males: (n=17)															
Helper	Group	1	3	1	16	0	1	1	17	2	7	0	1	1	
	Dyad	15	10	1	17	1	0	0	0	0	5	1	1	0	
Helpee	Group	1	4	1	12	0	2	2	18	2	5	3	0	1	
	Dyad	15	6	0	10	2	0	1	3	1	3	4	3	3	
Third-grade females: (n=18)															
Helper	Group	2	2	0	10	0	1	2	18	2	10	4	1	2	
	Dyad	11	18	0	14	3	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	3	
Helpee	Group	3	3	0	11	1	2	3	18	0	5	5	1	2	
	Dyad	11	14	1	9	4	2	1	0	0	3	7	1	1	
Fifth-grade males: (n=16)															
Helper	Group	1	1	0	11	0	1	2	14	1	11	0	1	5	
	Dyad	14	7	0	13	5	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	5	
Helpee	Group	3	0	0	15	0	2	1	18	0	8	1	0	0	
	Dyad	15	6	1	10	1	0	2	0	0	4	1	4	4	
Fifth-grade females: (n=17)															
Helper	Group	3	1	0	11	1	2	2	18	0	12	0	0	1	
	Dyad	9	9	6	15	2	0	3	1	0	4	1	0	1	
Helpee	Group	0	2	1	14	1	2	2	18	0	7	1	1	2	
	Dyad	5	5	2	23	3	0	2	1	0	5	3	0	2	

Table 2
Correlations Between Helpful Nominations, Play Ratings,
Work Ratings and Best Friends

	Grade 3				Grade 5			
	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	Ratings from males	Ratings from females	Ratings from females	Ratings from males	Ratings from males	Ratings from females	Ratings from females	Ratings from males
Nominations as:								
Play sociometric ratings								
Helpful to peers in group	.07	.56*	.72***	.65**	.79***	.68**	.71***	.36
Helpful to peers in dyad	.44	.60**	.73***	.55*	.79***	.77***	.59**	.47
Helpful to interviewee in group	.46	.64**	.72***	.55*	.63**	.50*	.56*	.43
Helpful to interviewee in dyad	.38	.41	.71***	.53*	.65**	.56*	.68**	.40
Work sociometric ratings								
Helpful to peers in group	.24	.35	.80***	.67**	.77***	.61**	.62**	.34
Helpful to peers in dyad	.77***	.45	.73***	.70***	.73***	.72***	.56*	.55*
Helpful to interviewee in group	.60**	.59**	.71***	.67**	.55*	.35	.48*	.32
Helpful to interviewee in dyad	.59**	.47	.69***	.65**	.54*	.61**	.58**	.39
Best friends nominations								
	Males		Females		Males		Females	
Helpful to peers in group	.56*		.74***		.48		.56*	
Helpful to peers in dyad	.60**		.68**		.49		.62**	
Helpful to interviewee in group	.60**		.67**		.62**		.60**	
Helpful to interviewee in dyad	.15		.72***		.77***		.64**	

*p < .05

**p < .01

***p < .001

Table 3
Regression Coefficients Attributable
to Grade, Sex, and Uniqueness

	Play ratings from males	Play ratings from females	Work ratings from males	Work ratings from females
Grade	- .51***	- .69***	- .71***	- .59***
Sex	-1.82***	1.36***	-1.62***	1.25***
Uniqueness:				
Helper Group	- .13	- .14	- .18	- .20*
Dyad	.06	.12	.09	.12
Helpee Group	- .14	- .37***	- .22*	- .36***
Dyad	- .22**	- .11	- .19	- .13

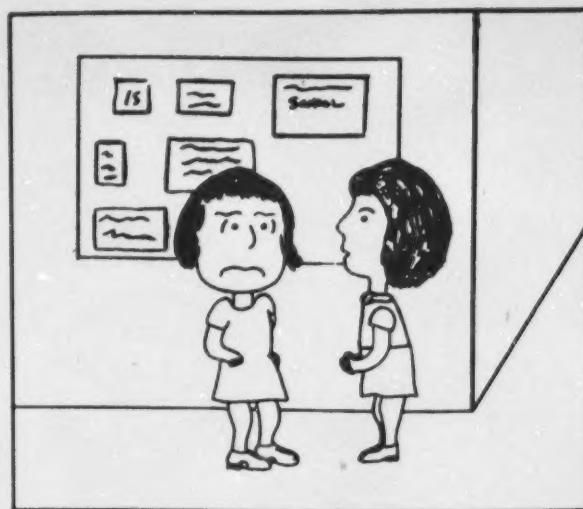
* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$



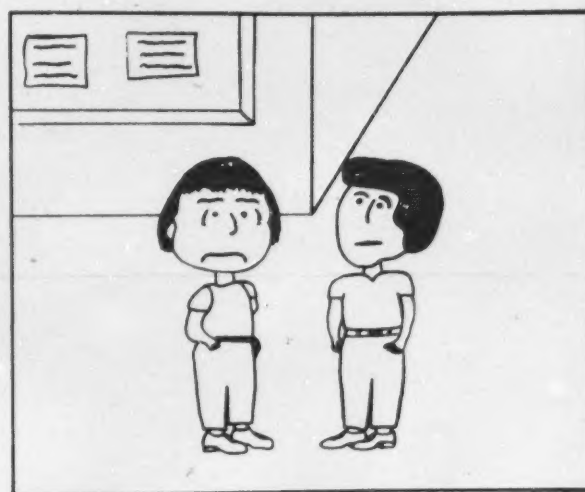
(a)



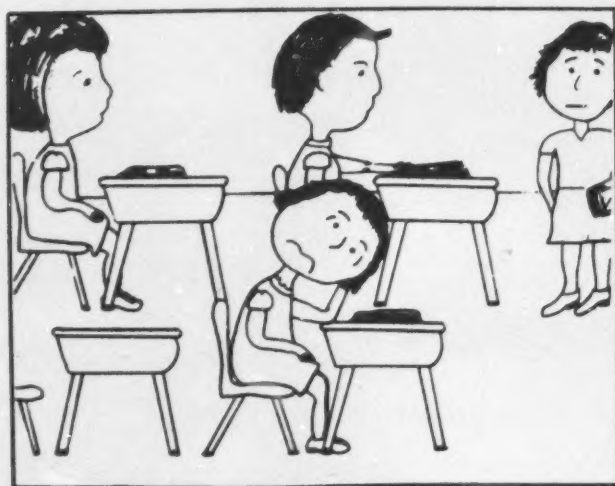
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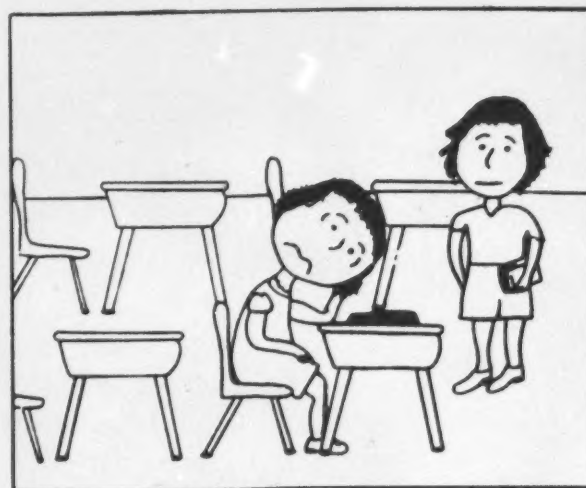
(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)